

Appropriators Are Committed To Addressing Opioid Addiction

By: Congressman Tom Cole

In the House Appropriations Committee, we understand the importance and essential role federal funding has in combating the opioid crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 115 Americans die every day from an opiate overdose – that is one American every 13 minutes. In fact, drug overdoses are the leading cause of death among Americans under 50. We know the most significant contributor to this alarming fact is the misuse and abuse of opioids. Prescription drugs like oxycodone, codeine and morphine have become readily available through illegal channels and are distributed on the street without supervision from the original prescribing health professional. Addiction to these once well-intended drugs, as well as illicit use of heroin and fentanyl, have led to the deaths of over 50,000 Americans in just one year.

Combatting this epidemic has become one of the most significant challenges facing families and communities across our nation. Thanks to leadership from Chairman Hal Rogers, Congress has been targeting financial resources to address this crisis since 2015. Most recently, in March, Congress approved nearly \$4 billion in appropriations to combat the opioid epidemic. As I lead Republicans in crafting the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education spending bill for fiscal year 2019, I will maintain our financial commitment to see this crisis turn a corner. This includes supporting numerous medical research and public health programs within the National Institutes of Health and CDC that are targeted toward treatment, prevention, and care for those suffering from opioid abuse.

In addition to work done by the House Committee on Appropriations, I want to join Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy in commending the efforts of Chairman Walden of the Committee on Energy and Commerce and Chairman Brady of the Committee on Ways and Means. Both Chairmen have held numerous hearings to examine the many facets of this issue. In their respective jurisdictions, they have proposed and passed through committee multiple pieces of legislation related to enforcement, prevention, education and treatment of opioid abuse. Leadership from these Committees and work from their respective members have been steadfast and critical to the ongoing efforts to reducing the prevalence of opioid addiction. Addressing this continuing epidemic is a top priority, and both Republicans and Democrats in Congress are committed to continuing to help families and communities struggling with the consequences of addiction.

Opioid abuse and addiction is not an urban issue, nor it is a rural or suburban issue – it is a national issue. The increasing rate of opioid misuse affects us all - young and old, families and friends, neighbors and co-workers. I believe that our sights are set on eliminating the hold opioid addiction has on our nation. Collectively, we are dedicated to solving this crisis and seeing its end. I will continue to stand with President Trump, Majority Leader McCarthy, and our bipartisan, bicameral coalition of Congressional allies in their determination to ending our nation's addiction to opioids.

Tom Cole is a Republican representative from Oklahoma. Cole is the Subcommittee Appropriations Chair for Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education.